



# Species

ISSUE 63

## 2022 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat



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## The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together toward achieving the vision of “a just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to both prevent the loss and aid recovery of the diversity of life on earth.”

Members of SSC belong to one or more of near 200 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities, Action Partnerships, Task Forces, and Conservation Committees that make up the Network, each focusing on a taxonomic group (plants, fungi, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and invertebrates), national species, or a disciplinary issue, such as sustainable use and livelihoods, translocation of species, wildlife health, climate change, and conservation planning.

Framed by the Species Conservation Cycle, SSC’s major role is to provide information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services, and their support to human livelihoods. This information is fed into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

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### 2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan encompasses the joint work of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and a number of partnerships to achieve more than 2,700 targets proposed by the Network during the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

To accomplish those targets, the Species Conservation Cycle was established, which is the conceptual framework for the Network activities. The Species Conservation Cycle’s main purpose is to guide efforts for valuing and conserving biodiversity through three essential components that are linked to each other:

**ASSESS:** Understand and inform the world about the status and trends of biodiversity.

**PLAN:** Develop collaborative, inclusive and science-based conservation strategies, plans and policies.

**ACT:** Convene and mobilise conservation actions to improve the status of biodiversity.



Their implementation requires two transversal components:

**NETWORK:** Enhance and support our immediate network and alliances to achieve our biodiversity targets.

**COMMUNICATE:** Drive strategic and targeted communications to enhance our conservation impact.

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### SSC Species Report

Annual progress in the implementation of the 2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan is documented in the SSC *Species Report*, which consists of a comprehensive description and analysis of the activities and results generated by the members of the SSC Network each year. Each SSC Group contributes to this document by providing a yearly summarised description of their achievements, which is presented in stand-alone reports.

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## Structure of the IUCN SSC Stand-alone Report

Stand-alone reports summarize the activities conducted and results generated by each group member of the SSC. Following, is the structure of the stand-alone report and the contents under each session.

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### Title of the SSC Group

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### Photograph(s) of the Chair / Co-Chairs

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### Group information

Includes names of Chair / Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Red List Authority Coordinators and Program Officers, their institutional affiliations, number of members and social networks currently active.

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### Logo of the SSC Group

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### Mission statement

Includes the mission of the group.

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### Projected impact for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the description of the impact on species conservation resulting from the implementation of the targets formulated by the group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

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### Targets for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the targets planned by the SSC Group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium ordered alphabetically by component of the Species Conservation Cycle. Each target is labeled with a numerical code (e.g., T-001, T-012) that identifies it in the SSC DATA database and its status for the reported year is indicated (Not initiated, On track or Achieved).

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### Activities and results

Includes the targets for which activities were conducted and results were generated during the reported year, ordered alphabetically, first by component of the Species Conservation Cycle, and second by Activity Category. Description of activities and results includes the indicator that best describes progress, its associated quantitative or qualitative result, and the narrative description of the activity conducted or result obtained. Each activity or result reported is linked to the Key Species Result to which it is mainly associated (e.g., KSR#1, KSR#5).

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### Acknowledgements

Includes the acknowledgements to funding agencies, partners, and persons who contributed to the progress of the targets of the group.

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### Summary of achievements

Summarises information of the group's strategic plan for the quadrennium and progress achieved implementing targets for all the components of the Species Conservation Cycle during the reported year.

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### Example for the recommended citation:

Okita-Ouma, B, and Slotov, R. 2023. 2022 Report of the African Elephant Specialist Group. In: Nassar, JM, García, L, Mendoza, L, Andrade, ND, Bezeng, S, Birkhoff, J, Bohm, M, Canteiro, C, Geschke, J, Henriques, S, Iwande, S, Mileham, K, Ramos, M, Rodríguez, A, Rodríguez, JP, Street, B, and Yerena, E (Eds.). 2022 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat. International Union for Conservation of Nature. 10 pp.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

# IUCN SSC African Elephant Specialist Group



SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE  
Twitter: @IUCN\_AfESG

**CO-CHAIR**

**Benson Okita-Ouma**  
Save The Elephants,  
Nairobi, Kenya

**CO-CHAIR**

**Rob Slotow**  
University of KwaZulu-  
Natal, KwaZulu-Natal,  
South Africa

**RED LIST AUTHORITY  
COORDINATOR**

**Kathleen Gobush**  
Vulcan Inc./University  
of Washington, US

**NUMBER OF MEMBERS**

90

## Mission statement

The mission of the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) is to promote the long-term conservation of Africa's Elephants throughout their range.

## Projected impact 2021–2025

To promote the long-term conservation of African Elephants throughout their range.

## Targets 2021–2025

### ASSESS

**T-001** Compile, review and synthesise information on African Elephant numbers and distribution across all range states, with a special emphasis on forest populations, within the African Elephant Database.  
Status: On track

**T-002** Participate in the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE)-Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)-Technical Advisory Group (TAG) processes.  
Status: On track

**T-003** Publish the Red List assessments for African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) and African Savanna Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) in 2021.  
Status: Achieved

**T-004** Conduct Green Status assessments for both Elephant species in priority regions.  
Status: On track

**T-005** Update AfESG's position statement on the removal of African Elephants from the wild for captive use out of their natural range.  
Status: On track

**T-006** Revise the 'IUCN/SSC AfESG Guidelines for the *in situ* Translocation of the African Elephant for Conservation Purposes' in line with the broader IUCN conservation translocation guidelines.  
Status: On track

**T-007** Develop guidelines/criteria for prioritising sites for survey support.  
Status: On track

**T-008** Continue to determine the genetic identity of taxonomically undefined Elephant populations.  
Status: On track

**T-009** Fulfil the AfESG's obligations to CITES.  
Status: On track

**T-032** Update guidelines on population survey methods by incorporating newly emerging techniques for Savanna and Forest Elephants.  
Status: On track

**T-036** Provide a better understanding of the context and conceptualisation of sustainable use of African Elephants through the consumptive and the non-consumptive uses continuum.  
Status: On track

### PLAN

**T-012** Enhance the functionality and capacity of the African Elephant Database and form a consortium for its technical and financial support.  
Status: On track

**T-013** Re-invigorate the African Elephant Library, build the capacity to curate historical survey information and investigate gaps.  
Status: On track

**T-015** Continue with the provision of technical input into the revision of the African Elephant Action Plan when called upon by the range states.  
Status: On track

**T-016** Support strategic and action planning processes at national, regional and continental levels, including assisting with the production of National Elephant Action Plans.  
Status: On track

**T-017** Develop updated AfESG guidelines on human-elephant co-existence (HEC), innovative new approaches based on landscape-level spatial planning, known Elephant behaviours and community-based conservation approaches.  
Status: On track

### ACT

**T-025** Release a statement on the AfESG's position on the two species issue.  
Status: Achieved



Presention of AfESG on the status of the African Forest Elephant and RedList at the CITES CoP19 meeting in Panama in 2022  
Photo: Mohammed Yahya



Meeting between AfESG and Kenya delegation to CITES CoP19 meeting in Panama  
Photo: Mohammed Yahya

**T-030** Provide technical guidance for management of Elephants as requested.  
Status: On track

**T-031** Advise on the conservation and management of Elephant range and critical habitats.  
Status: On track

#### NETWORK

**T-026** Promote and – where appropriate – establish collaborations with relevant IUCN SSC Specialist Groups.  
Status: On track

**T-027** Establish relevant working groups to engage with key issues that have been identified.  
Status: Achieved

**T-028** Respond to emerging issues and changing priorities.  
Status: On track

**T-029** Hold AfESG members meeting sessions in 2022 and 2024/2025 and – where appropriate or necessary– also hold brief inter-session online meetings.  
Status: On track

**T-033** Fundraise for the running of the AfESG secretariat and for AfESG activities.  
Status: On track

**T-034** Develop a community of practitioners through the HEC Working Group, exchanging information on best practice and successes and failures of appropriate tools in different contexts in Africa and in Asia.  
Status: On track

**T-035** Create a community of young innovative local people to participate in Elephant management and conservation issues.  
Status: On track

#### COMMUNICATE

**T-021** Enhance communication within and outside of the AfESG membership on key issues about African Elephants, through the establishment of a task force on communication.  
Status: On track

**T-022** Publish in 2023/2024 an update of the 2016 African Elephant Status Report (AESR) and publish a numbers and range only AESR in 2024.  
Status: On track

**T-023** Promote the creation and maintenance of linkages/connectivity between Elephant habitats.  
Status: On track

**T-024** Promote the *Pachyderm* biannual international peer-reviewed journal on Elephants and Rhinos.  
Status: On track

#### Activities and results 2022

##### ASSESS

##### Green List

**T-004** Conduct Green Status assessments for both Elephant species in priority regions. (KSR 6)

Number of new Green Status of Species assessments completed: 1

Result description: The IUCN Green Status of Species complements the Red List by providing a tool for assessing the recovery of species' populations and measuring their conservation success. In 2020, Green Status of Species assessments became an optional part of Red List assessments. The design of the new African Elephant Database (AED) recognizes that range states may like to undertake analysis of Elephant trends and it should the database will be designed to incorporate storage and analysis of long-term data. The Red List was based on the analysis of trends of the two species, i.e., the Forest and the Savannah Elephants.

##### Research activities

**T-001** Compile, review and synthesise information on African Elephant numbers and distribution across all range states, with a special emphasis on forest populations, within the African Elephant Database. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 0

Result description: All data has been acquired for countries included in the African Forest Elephant Status Report (AFESR) and the data review process is substantively complete. Draft narratives have been written for most of the report and lead authors are now going through the country-level text with the tables and maps

Rose Mayienda presenting African Elephant Database (AED) to side event hosted by the Asian Elephant Specialist Group at COP19 in Panama 2022  
Photo: Mohammed Yahya



to finalise population numbers, distribution, and reasons for change from the African Elephant Status Report (AESR) 2016. The savanna subgroup has kicked off and Chris Thouless will lead the production and will technically be supported by Fiona Maisels, Colin Craig will lead Southern Africa and John Howard will lead Eastern Africa in reviewing and writing the narrative. The team expects to receive results from the KAZA survey in April/May 2023 to generate the African Savannah Elephant Status Report (ASESR) before publication of the results.

**T-005 Update AfESG's position statement on the removal of African Elephants from the wild for captive use out of their natural range.** (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 0

Result description: A 'Dialogue Meeting' was called by CITES at the CITES CoP19 among African Elephant range states and other Parties, the CITES Secretariat and technical experts to come to a consensus on a clear, legal framework for live trade; a moratorium on live trade will occur during that process. Parties called on IUCN/AfESG to be part of the 'technical experts' to which IUCN/AfESG acknowledged through an intervention.

**T-006 Revise the IUCN/SSC AfESG Guidelines for the *in situ* Translocation of the African Elephant for Conservation Purposes in line with the broader IUCN conservation translocation guidelines.** (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 1

Result description: The discussion on the revision of the IUCN/AfESG guidelines for the *in situ* translocation of the African Elephant for conservation started in 2021. The discussion was to advise the Kenya Wildlife Research and Training Institute proposal rewinding of Elephants from the UK to Kenya. A team of about 13 experts was able to develop some guidelines and checklists that might guide the process of translocation. The aspects of the Guidelines that

are relevant during the planning phase are primarily logistical and technical points. We plan in 2023 to revise and develop broad guidelines for the *in situ* translocation of the African Elephant.

**T-007 Develop guidelines/criteria for prioritising sites for survey support.** (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 0

Result description: The state of knowledge on Elephant numbers and distribution varies widely across the continent. Some populations have never been surveyed, or are only rarely surveyed, while others are counted more frequently. The objectives of the AED include promoting the use of standardised, reliable survey techniques, as well as facilitating the task of donors, wildlife authorities and decision-makers in prioritising their efforts to monitor Elephant populations. In order to assist in meeting these objectives, a simple index measures the quality of Elephant population data available at the national, regional and continental levels. Based on this index, a system to identify and prioritise the areas where systematic surveys are most needed has been developed. The Information Quality Index (IQI) is an unbiased, normalised, and scalable index of the overall quality of information on Elephant population estimates and guesses. The IQI ranges from zero (no reliable information) to one (full range coverage using good-quality estimates) and is the product of two key variables: a measure of the quality of available data and a measure of the completeness of estimated coverage. The data quality measure is based on the ratio of good quality population data (estimates) to total population data (estimates and guesses); the data completeness measure is based on the ratio of assessed range to total known and possible range.

**T-008 Continue to determine the genetic identity of taxonomically undefined Elephant populations.** (KSR 6)

Number of species that have been assessed through the different tools: 1  
Result description: There may be uncertainty as to whether one or both species occur in a country. The two-species listing will encourage the genetic investigation of hitherto taxonomically undefined populations, to examine the importance and dynamics of hybridization. The AfESG had a number of meetings with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat to discuss the possibilities of supporting studies to genetically identify Forest and Savanna Elephants. Sam Wasser (Center for Environmental Forensic Sciences, University of Washington) has undertaken extensive studies to classify the Elephants but still there exist gaps in information for some regions and countries. The AfESG is still keen to fill in these gaps. These are the West Africa range stated and candidate sites – Burkina Faso (Bontoli Partial and Total Faunal Reserve; Arly National Park), Cote d'Ivoire (Tai National Park), Ghana (Digya National Park; Kakum Conservation Area; Ankasa Conservation Area; Red and White Volta Ecosystem), Guinea Bissau (Corubal-Dulombi Area), Liberia (Barrobo National Forest; Gola Forest; Grebo Forest; Krahn Bassa Forest; Sapo National Park; Wenegisi National Forest), Niger ( Babban Rafi Forest; W du Niger National Park; Okomu National Park); Senegal (Niokolo-Koba National Park), and Sierra Leone (Bagbe River Forest; Gola National Park).

**T-032 Update guidelines on population survey methods by incorporating newly emerging techniques for Savanna and Forest Elephants.** (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 0

Result description: The AfESG Secretariat met with Ms Celmira da Silva, the Director General of the National Administration of Conservation Areas of Mozambique (ANAC) to discuss ways of regularising frequency for conducting Elephant population surveys and agreed to initiate a discussion



Presentation of Africa Forest Elephant Status to Central and West range countries at the CITES CoP19 meeting in Panama November 2022  
Photo: Mohammed Yahya

between AfESG and ANAC to plan for the much-needed survey of Elephants in the larger Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) spanning almost 100,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The AfESG supported the recent aerial survey of Africa's largest Savanna Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) populations of the five countries that make up the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) – Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (total area of 312,000 km<sup>2</sup>) with review on the methods and results.

**T-036 Provide a better understanding of the context and conceptualisation of sustainable use of African Elephants through the consumptive and the non-consumptive uses continuum.** (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 0

Result description: Transforming the conversation on the sustainable use of Africa's Elephants. Long-standing polarised debates over the management and the acceptability of the sustainable use of Africa's Elephants have undermined collaboration for the conservation of Elephants and their habitats on the continent, as well as globally. Central to this debate are disagreements over the risks vs the benefits of sustainable use. Differences in values over the moral acceptability of different forms of sustainable use complicate decision-making processes. Due to the differences in moral values, the debate over the sustainable use of Elephants cannot be solved with science alone. Instead, like debates over other contentious issues such as gun control in the US and abortion, scientific evidence needs to be incorporated into a process together with moral values, attitudes and perspectives, and how different individuals and stakeholders will perceive that actions will lead to outcomes and the associated inherent assumptions. The AfESG has set up a Sustainable Working Group to tackle this issue. This working group seeks to explore potential areas of agreement and identify the evidence required to address

remaining gaps and areas of disagreement through a process that incorporates evidence together with attitudes towards, and perceptions of the levels of risk and threat, and different moral values over the types of actions and use that are considered acceptable.

#### **Synergy**

**T-009 Fulfil the AfESG's obligations to CITES.** (KSR 5)

Number of reports to CITES: 1

Result description: The CITES Secretariat on behalf of the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) submitted CoP19 Inf. 64 (E-CoP19-Inf-64-R1\_0.pdf (cites.org) in relation to CoP19 Proposals 4 & 5, CoP19 Doc 84.1 and CoP19 Inf. 4. The document highlighted issues related to CITES including the status of Forest Elephants (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*) and Savanna Elephants (*Loxodonta africana africana*), Red List assessment results, and future plans for the African Elephant database, and highlighted range states that require updating their Elephant population surveys. Moreover, the AfESG hosted or co-hosted four side events. The main side event by AfESG was on an updated view of African Forest Elephant status and distribution and implications for species' conservation, management, and related policies. The AfESG (Chris Thouless, Sam Wasser, Kathleen Gobush and Ben Okita) presented IUCN Red List Assessments for the African Forest Elephant, DNA-based distributions of Forest, Savanna and hybrid African Elephants, and preliminary status of the African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) as of 2022. An offer to assist Range States with the best available science on the species and other technical support was emphasised. The other three side events that AfESG co-hosted include the Elephant Coexistence toolbox with Save the Elephants; Kathmandu declaration and its implication for Asian Elephant with the Asian Elephant Specialist Group where AfESG (Rose Mayienda and Ben Okita)

spoke about the African Elephant database and how it could provide a platform for the planned Asian Elephant database and multi-national collaboration to combating transnational environmental crime with the Centre for environmental forensic science. A special meeting between AfESG and African Elephant ranges states from Central and West Africa took place under the auspices of the African Elephant Coalition (AEC).

#### **PLAN**

##### **Planning**

**T-012 Enhance the functionality and capacity of the African Elephant Database and form a consortium for its technical and financial support.** (KSR 9)

Proportion of partners onboard to support information system: 80%

Result description Progress was made by initiating and concluding other activities of this project. A final report on the AED's functional and operational requirements was produced which includes information gathered from interviews and surveys, a competitive assessment of the conservation technology landscape, user profiles, use cases, and requirements for a future version of the AED. Additionally, a second consultant was contracted to evaluate and document the AED, including the production of a set of technical specifications. As part of this effort, a proposal has been submitted for the complete redevelopment of the AED on a modern technology stack that would effectively utilise cloud technologies for hosting and development of standard application modules. This effort would spend funds earmarked for an AED prototype but is likely to require additional funds which are being assessed.

**T-013 Re-invigorate the African Elephant Library, build the capacity to curate historical survey information and investigate gaps.** (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/strategies: 1

The 19th Meeting of Parties of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) was held on 5th to 8th July 2022, in Libreville Gabon, Thomas Breuer represented AfESG speaking at the meeting  
Photo: Mohammed Yahya



**Result description:** As the African Elephant Specialist Group are updating both the Forest and Savannah Elephant reports both the reports and personal communication are being saved in the African Elephant Library for easy access to the information used in the status report in years to come. Included in the updates is the archiving of the National Elephant Action Plans report for the Elephant range countries.

**T-016 Support strategic and action planning processes at national, regional and continental levels, including assisting with the production of National Elephant Action Plans. (KSR 8)**

Number of conservation plans/strategies updated: 1

**Result description:** AfESG was requested to review and give comments on the Nigerian National Elephant Action Plan that was developed by the Federal Ministry of Environment. Nigeria is one of relatively few countries in Africa to have both Forest Elephants and Savannah Elephants, although their populations are both now much depleted. Elephants in Nigeria today are mainly restricted to protected areas and small forest fragments where they are increasingly isolated and vulnerable to extinction. In only 30 years Nigeria's Elephant population has crashed from an estimated 1,200-1,500 to an estimated 300-400 today (Federal Ministry of Environment 2022).

**T-017 Develop updated AfESG guidelines on human-elephant co-existence (HEC), innovative new approaches based on landscape-level spatial planning, known Elephant behaviours and community-based conservation approaches. (KSR 8)**

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/strategies: 1

**Result description:** AfESG secured funds to update its guidelines on human-elephant coexistence. The AfESG is seeking to work with the Human-Wildlife-Coexistence Specialist Group (HWCSG) to edit the relevant sections of the Guidelines of IUCN

on human-wildlife conflict to focus their relevance to African Elephants. It will solicit the input of the members of the AfESG HEC Working Group for comment on the specific sections. The work will start in September 2023.

#### **Policy**

**T-015 Continue with the provision of technical input into the revision of the African Elephant Action Plan when called upon by the range states. (KSR 9)**

Number of documents provided to support/guide policy making: 1

**Result description:** The technical revision of the African Elephant Action Plan draws on the collective expertise of the AERS as well as technical support from members of the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG). Contributions from these groups were collated largely through the proceedings of two workshop sessions conducted in 2019. Progress in the revision was then delayed in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Revisions to the Action Plan resumed in the latter half of 2021 and over the course of 2022.

#### **ACT**

##### **Conservation actions**

**T-030 Provide technical guidance for management of Elephants as requested. (KSR 10)**

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 1

**Result description:** Some members of the AfESG reviewed and provided feedback to the Nigerian Elephant Actions Plan. In addition, in Kenya, three members – Ben Okita, Shadrack Ngene and Winnie Kiiru of the African Elephant Specialist Group – were involved in the drafting of the Kenya Elephant Action Plan that covers the period 2023 to 2032.

**T-031 Advise on the conservation and management of Elephant range and critical habitats. (KSR 10)**

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 0

**Result description:** A special meeting between AfESG and African Elephant range states from Central and West Africa took place under the auspices of the African Elephant Coalition (AEC) at the CITES CoP19 meeting in Panama on November 23, 2022. Representatives of 22 range states attended. The meeting focused on the status of Forest and Savanna Elephants in those two regions; the development and implementation of National Elephant Action Plans; collaboration and partnerships in refining the classification of Forest/Savanna/Hybrid, and human-elephant co-existence toolkit. A representative of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) participated by presenting progress with the implementation of the MoU between CMS and West African range states in which AfESG is a technical partner. The engagement was very positive, and a follow-up meeting was proposed to be held as soon as possible prior to the finalisation of the Forest Elephant status report. The AEC secretariat extended an invitation to AfESG to their next meeting for further engagement and networking. Chris Thouless, Mohammed Yahya, Sam Wasser, Lucy King, Ben Okita of AfESG and Clara Nobbe of CMS made presentations at this meeting. Also, the Co-Chair of AfESG, Dr Ben Okita had a bilateral meeting with the new Kenyan Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage, Hon. Penina Malonza at the CITES CoP19 meeting in Panama and discussed reawakening the national implementation of corridors and dispersal areas report. He was accompanied by the CEO and a Board Director of the Conservation Alliance of Kenya. Securing wildlife corridors would help reduce incidences of human-elephant conflict. The new Kenyan minister reiterated Kenya's commitment to prioritise securing wildlife corridors, which is a priority issue for Elephant conservation in Africa.

#### **Policy**

**T-025 Release a statement on the AfESG's position on the two species issue. (KSR 10)**





Meeting between AfESG Secretariat and Celmira Frederico Pena da Silva iDirector General of ANAC of Mozambique  
Photo: Mohammed Yahya



Save the Elephants CEO Frank Pope (second right), Ben Okita Co-Chair African Elephant Specialist Group (extreme left) and Festus Ihwagi (extreme right) paid a courtesy call to Hon. Najib Balala Cabinet Secretary Kenya Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife  
Photo: Ben Okita

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: At present, CITES has deferred decisions incorporating changes in their standard nomenclature for African Elephants, until the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In the interim, and at CoP19 leading up to CoP20, CITES will seek the perspectives of the Parties and other stakeholders on the potential effects on CITES decisions to recognize Forest and Savanna Elephants as separate species. This will include a review of the taxonomic-nomenclatural history of African Elephants in CITES and accepted use in biological literature. The two-species listing will assist range states in the harmonisation of nomenclature in national legislation and focus attention on the differing management and conservation issues faced by the two species.

## NETWORK

### Capacity building

**T-027 Establish relevant working groups to engage with key issues that have been identified.** (KSR 2)

Number of task forces and working groups established: 0

Result description: AfESG has recruited Prof Duan Biggs to head the Sustainable

Task group. Duan is the Olajos Goslow Chair of Environmental Science at the Northern Arizona University. He is a conservation scientist with 20 years of experience globally in community-based conservation, sustainable tourism development, wildlife trade, human-wildlife co-existence, and managing conservation conflicts (<https://cbcs.centre.uq.edu.au/profile/423/duan-biggs>). The AfESG has been engaging with Duan over the last eight months to collectively craft a process which we believe will enable the Task Force, and then the specialist group more broadly, to engage constructively with the difficult issues that need to be discussed, and produce an outcome that will be of assistance to the range states, and hopefully catalyse a more unified African approach to Elephant conservation and sustainable use. The envisaged process would allow members to engage deeply with the evidence around these issues, in a manner that accounts for different perspectives and values that characterise the debate. In this way, the AfESG can present the evidence and different values and perspectives in a balanced and more objective manner. Duan understands the context of sustainable use of Elephants but also has experience in conflict resolution and, with this as a base, AfESG believes he can take this matter forward in a positive and successful way.

**T-034 Develop a community of practitioners through the HEC Working Group, exchanging information on best practice and successes and failures of appropriate tools in different contexts in Africa and in Asia.** (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 1

Result description: Save the Elephant and the African Specialist Group organised a side event at the CITES Cop19 meeting in Panama to introduce to participants in Elephant range countries on the human-elephant co-existence toolbox. The toolbox is designed for trainers, project officers and community leaders to identify the source of conflict with Elephants and then guide people on how best to protect their property with the resources available. The toolbox is split into seven chapters, with all materials, ingredients and technical information. The Toolbox Index lists tools that have been collected from across the Elephant range, from savannahs to forests, from conservation field partners to rural farmers, including innovative individuals who have invented novel ideas that really work. The toolbox has been translated into both French and Kiswahili.

**T-035 Create a community of young innovative local people to participate in Elephant management and conservation issues.** (KSR 2)

Number of members included in a community of Elephant management and conservation issues: 1

Result description: The AfESG has recruited a number of young scientists to join the specialist Group. In 2022, the AfESG organised a special session during its 9<sup>th</sup> membership meeting for young scientists to present new methods of counting Elephants and new statistical approaches on estimating Elephants, measures and tools used to encounter human-wildlife conflicts. A number of young scientists organised and participated at the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Parties of the Congo Forest Partnership (CBFP) that was held on July 5-8, 2022, in Gabon. Dr Thomas Breuer presented on behalf of the SG at this meeting focusing mainly on the conservation and management of the Forest Elephant following its recognition as a separate species from the Savanna Elephant. Amongst the issues also discussed at the meeting were international, regional, and national issues related to the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable management of forests, the fight against climate change and the sustainable development of the Congo Basin. The AfESG was also represented at the IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress held in Rwanda in July 2022.

#### **Membership**

**T-029 Hold AfESG members' meeting sessions in 2022 and 2024/2025 and – where appropriate or necessary – also hold brief inter-session online meetings.** (KSR 2)

Number of members meetings held: 2

Result description: The AfESG meetings are held after every two years. The 8<sup>th</sup> AfESG members' meeting was held in July 2019 in Pretoria, South Africa. Due to COVID-19, the 9<sup>th</sup> AfESG members' meeting could not be held in 2021 and was postponed to 2022. The meetings were held in four sessions with the first and second sessions being held on September 13-14, and the third and fourth sessions on October 18-19, 2022.

The aim of the 9<sup>th</sup> members' meeting of the African Elephant Specialist Group was to update and exchange scientific and technical information on all aspects of Elephant research, conservation, planning development, management, extension, education and training amongst the AfESG members. The aim also is to keep members aware of global and regional policy processes, events, and new opportunities for AfESG to engage in activities. The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AfESG focused on the conservation and management of the Forest and Savannah Elephant species and emerging challenges such as co-existence and effects of climate change. This shorter 4-day online AfESG Meeting covered selected topics of current and special interest with a focus on Forest Elephants and human-elephant conflict. AfESG members made presentations, and there was a session of Q&A and a way forward. It was agreed that the communication team would organise more webinars in 2023 to encourage presentations from young scientists and have more regional representation and presentations.

#### **Synergy**

**T-026 Promote and – where appropriate – establish collaborations with relevant IUCN SSC Specialist Groups.** (KSR 3)

Number of IUCN groups collaborating with AfESG: 1

Result description: AfESG (Kathleen Gobush, Mohammed Yahya, and Ben Okita) had a brief bilateral with the Executive Vice President of AZA, Craig Hoover and the SSC Chair, Jon Paul Rodriguez to update each party on the progress made with regard to collaborative and partnership talks between AfESG and the Zoo community. An engagement framework between AfESG and the Zoo community was set under the SSC's Chair's office in 2021. The AZA reiterated its commitment to work with and support *in situ* conservation activities whereas the SSC Chair informed the meeting of a planned release of a report detailing potential collaborative areas between the Zoo community and the *in situ*

conservationists. This report will be further discussed in the AfESG *in situ* to *ex situ* Task Force once released for further action. The AfESG was invited to share its experience in helping set up the Kenyan National Species Specialist Group. The meeting was held at ESARO offices on June 17, 2022, and enjoined Kenya Wildlife Services, Museums of Kenya, BirdLife South Africa, Wildlife Research Training Institute, Nature Kenya and IUCN SSC.

**T-033 Fundraise for the running of the AfESG secretariat and for AfESG activities.** (KSR 1)

Number of funding partners established and maintained: 4

Result description: To date, AfESG managed to secure funds from WWF International, WWF-US, Save the Elephants (STE) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The STE and IFAW have committed yearly payments of US \$50,000 for the next three years to support the activities of the AfESG. The WWF International provided US \$10,000 and WWF-US \$15,000 in support of AfESG activities.

#### **COMMUNICATE Communication**

**T-021 Enhance communication within and outside of the AfESG membership on key issues about African Elephants, through the establishment of a task force on communication.** (KSR 13)

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 2

Result description: The Communication Task Force in 2022 organised the 9<sup>th</sup> AfESG members' meeting, supported in making posters and flyers for conferences that AfESG attended and also supported the secretariat in developing information documents for the CITES-CoP19 meeting held in Panama. The team is involved in redesigning a new website for AfESG which will be a resource hub for Elephant information, training material and tools to contain

human-wildlife conflict. In 2023 the Task Force will organise regular webinars for both members of the AfESG and the public.

**T-022 Publish in 2023/2024 an update of the 2016 African Elephant Status Report (AESR) and publish a numbers and range only AESR in 2024. (KSR 13)**

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: In 2023, the AfESG will be publishing the African Elephant status reports in two parts following the Group's recognition of African Elephants as two distinct species in 2021, i.e., the African Forest Elephant and the African Savanna Elephant. In addition to the separate reports, the numbers of the two species will be combined to give a total Elephant population at a country, region and continental level. This will facilitate assessing trends relative to previous status reports in which the species were combined.

**T-023 Promote the creation and maintenance of linkages/connectivity between Elephant habitats. (KSR 13)**

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The AfESG was represented in a number of meetings in 2022. The three meetings that AfESG attended were held in Zimbabwe, Gabon and Rwanda. The African Elephant Conference was held in Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe in May 24-26, 2022. The AfESG was represented by Dr Patience Gandiwa and Dr Malvern Karidozo. The 19th Meeting of Parties of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) was held on July 5-8, 2022, in Libreville, Gabon. The AfESG in collaboration with WWF, WCS conducted a workshop that was divided into four sessions. The first session introduced the new taxonomy of African Elephants and the conservation status of Forest Elephants and introduced the workshop objectives.

This was followed by the different methods and results of monitoring Forest Elephant populations and monitoring Elephant crop damage and conservation strategies. The third part dealt with methods of mitigating human-elephant conflict and the importance of human-elephant co-existence through a holistic approach. The last session consisted of an exchange on the current laws and approaches to anti-poaching and Elephant protection and practical cases of successful law enforcement (<https://pfbc-cbfp.org/nws-partner/WWF-Session-Report.html>). The third meeting of the Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC) conference was held in Rwanda on July 18-23, 2023. Dr Thomas Breuer organised a meeting for the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) countries that encompass Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Central African Republic. The theme of the meeting was new conservation and coexistence strategies.

**T-024 Promote the *Pachyderm* biannual international peer-reviewed journal on Elephants and Rhinos. (KSR 13)**

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 2

Result description: The Co-Chairs routinely write a chapter summarising the activities of AfESG, and accomplishments for the year and also highlight progress made in implementing our Group's 2021–2024 quadrennium targets that are highlighted in this SSC report.

Elephant Status Reporting. We thank IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Offices for managing finances, technical reporting, and contracts. The IUCN Global Species Programme, especially Richard Jenkins, Ackbar Joolia and Jafet Nassar, are thanked for their continued support and strategic advice. Rose Mayienda, Rachel Sharon Ouma, Mohammed Yahya of AfESG secretariat are thanked for tirelessly supporting the running of AfESG. All the AfESG members are thanked for their continued support, commitment, and contribution to the Group's mission.

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**Summary of achievements**

**Total number of targets 2021–2025: 30**

**Geographic regions: 15 Global, 15 Africa**

**Actions during 2022:**

Assess: 9 (KSR 5, 6)

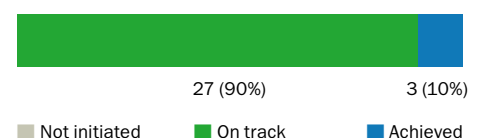
Plan: 5 (KSR 8, 9)

Act: 3 (KSR 10)

Network: 6 (KSR 1, 2, 3, 4)

Communicate: 4 (KSR 13)

**Overall achievement 2021–2025:**



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